



2018-2019 CREATIVE PLACEMAKING WRITING COMPETITION

**HOSTED BY THE AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOCIATION
URBAN DESIGN AND PRESERVATION DIVISION**
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
THE NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING



American Planning Association
**Urban Design and
Preservation Division**

Making Great Communities Happen

DEAR FELLOW PLACEMAKERS

The Urban Design & Preservation Division of the American Planning Association is thrilled to offer this collection of stories in partnership with the National Consortium for Creative Placemaking. These stories are a part of a writing competition focused on the power of creative placemaking and the way that it is changing how we preserve, design, and plan.

The entries capture the diversity of location and diversity of experience within the Urban Design & Preservation Division. They show the importance of history, social justice, economics, and art. Most of all, these reflections show how successful creative placemaking is uniquely designed for each place and for each community. We hope these stories inspire you, like they have inspired us, to connect to people and place in a new way.

Sincerely,

Lauren A. Trice, AICP

Chair, Urban Design & Preservation Division
American Planning Association

TURNING LEMONS INTO LEMONADE

YURIKO JEWETT



As a community advocate in my Oakland, California, neighborhood, I organized our local version of Parking Day — an annual celebration with a mission to temporarily repurpose on-street parking spaces into shared places called parklets. I partnered with the area’s neighborhood association and we built a “lemonade stand parklet” in front of a local business called the MLK Cafe. We served the beverage du jour made with lemons foraged from backyard trees and offered it to passersby during the evening commute hours. The event was a huge success, and a creative way for residents in the area to get to know each other.

Shortly after this event, the cafe owner, an immigrant named Asmerom from the East African country of Eritrea, pulled me aside and asked: “Can you help me build a parklet so we can do this all the time?” The timing was perfect, as Oakland had just announced a pilot program to permit 15 new parklets throughout the city. Together Asmerom and I walked through the administrative process and within several months his small business was successful in securing one of the limited parklet permits. His excitement for the project was contagious. He was quick to point out with a laugh that they don’t have parklets in Eritrea.

What I learned through completing the MLK Cafe Parklet project is that common large-scale urban planning community outreach methods may not work for projects that focus on human experience at the neighborhood scale. It became obvious, for example, that many people in my neighborhood don’t know how to read a site plan or technical drawing. So for this project the image that best

communicated the idea behind the design of the MLK Cafe Parklet was this historical photograph.

During the 1880s, the Oakland Consolidated Street Railway Company ran a series of pagoda-style trolley cars along Grove Street (Grove Street was later renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Way in 1984, the street where the cafe is now located). Asmerom placed the photograph in the cafe and it resonated with his customers and the local community in a way that a fancy 3D rendering never could. A collective consciousness around the idea began to take shape. We had to put this old train back in the street where it belongs, and if we pooled our talents we could build one together.

Architects, carpenters, painters, and welders volunteered their time, and donations streamed in from neighbors and a local developer to help pay for materials. The parklet was a true community-build that took place over the course of several months, one weekend at a time.

The MLK Cafe Parklet is a placemaking project that shows how a community can come together and use urban design as a tool to tell a forgotten story. For residents in a city like Oakland, a place that is experiencing incredible change at a rapid pace, finding the opportunity to create an urban sanctuary for the next generation, while paying respect to the neighborhood of the past, made for a powerful community building experience.

Born and raised in Honolulu, Hawaii, Yuriko Jewett spent many childhood hours navigating the water’s edge — which may explain why these days she is employed as a shoreline development analyst with the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC).

She holds a master’s degree in urban design from the Spitzer School of Architecture at the City College of New York and a bachelor’s degree in creative writing from San Francisco State University. She currently lives in Oakland, California, with her husband, two cats, and a flock of backyard chickens.



LONGFELLOW NEIGHBORHOOD CELEBRATING THE OPENING DAY OF THE MLK CAFE PARKLET
PHOTO: GENE ANDERSON



PEOPLE OF ALL AGES AND ABILITIES ENJOYING THE WALNUT PARK. FREE PROGRAMMING INCLUDED MUSIC, ENTERTAINMENT, AND PRIZES AMONG THE MULTIPLE HUBS.



CAMINA en WALNUT PARK

ERIC MCANALLY

With a background in psychology and prior experience working abroad, Eric McAnally realized that the built environment psychological and sociological impact on communities. This drove him to become a Master of Planning (MPL) candidate at the University of Southern California (USC), garnering experiences in urban planning, urban design, and consultancy.

Eric is seeking opportunities as a design strategist on both a domestic and international level, overall, desiring collaboration to create, facilitate, and implement innovative and sustainable ideas, spaces, and places in which to live, work, heal, and play.

The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) GO Human campaign is a series of tactical urbanism and placemaking projects that promote safety and encourage walking and biking by temporarily redesigning roadways within communities for people, creating safer, healthier, and informed cities. Over the summer, the architecture and urban design firm that I was interning with, Studio One Eleven, and SCAG had agreed to work together on a series of Go Human projects. The most impactful project within this series that I honorably participated in was our temporary installation in Walnut Park. This is because this specific project was not placemaking for the sake of placemaking—it tested a plan that a community had a hand in creating. We collectively wanted to bring that community vision to life and showcase how a future permanent project would look like and create sustainable benefits.

Walnut Park is a community in need, consisting of significant indicators such as having low car ownership, high obesity rates, and multiple collisions and fatalities along the specific corridor targeted. Working the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, there were more than 20 tabling groups such as YWCA. Public Works assisted in temporarily closing the road down, allowing everyone to get the project from install to uninstall. Hilda L. Solis, our First District Supervisor, came to show support and give commendations. Everyone came together to take pride and ownership in what the demo for.

Along the corridor, there were four demonstration areas, consisting of project treatments including a scramble crosswalk, a multi-use path, art installations, curb extensions, and a bus bulb-out. People of all ages and abilities came to activate each site! To increase the vibrancy of the street, free family programming, including music, entertainment, and prizes, were among multiple hubs. There was informative trivia about walking and biking. To emphasize the importance of community feedback, surveys and feedback walls were at three “passport” stations along the corridor to educate visitors on planner jargon, such as multi-use paths and scramble crosswalks, and to gather opinions and ideas about the designs. After analyzing the data, over 90% of users within each categorical improvement wanted the additional features added to be implemented. That is a statistically significant and unanimous decision coming from the community of Walnut Park itself!

Placemaking projects with documentation and data like this help inform grant applications for permanent improvements, and, if the improvements were to become implemented, can resolve important societal issues. They promote healthier neighborhoods and innovative futures. They create safe, multi-generational spaces to live, work, heal, and play, and they exemplify what a true collaborative effort it takes to create harmony among us all.

AN ART FESTIVAL AS A CATALYST OF CHANGE

ANTONIO MOYA-LATORRE



The Fazendinha Project is leveraging the power of creative placemaking to catalyze change in Jardim Colombo, a community in São Paulo that witnessed the turning of Fazendinha, a 1,000 square-meter space that used to be a little farm, into a huge dumping site. Jardim Colombo is a dense neighborhood, and Fazendinha is currently the only large open space available for public use.

One year ago, the community leaders Ivanildo Olivera and Ester Carro, with the support of ArqFuturo, began considering transforming this site into a park. A volunteer clean-up crew ended up filling 40 tracks with rubble. However, despite this huge collective effort, Fazendinha continued to accumulate trash, causing despair on the part of the volunteers.

The challenge was whether a new park could build community beyond the physical transformation of Fazendinha. When I arrived to Jardim Colombo and met Ester on June 4, 2018, we realized the need for developing a cultural program for the community in parallel with the park project. In time, we came up with an idea that brought these two goals together: the organization of an art and participation festival on the dumping site.

In six weeks, we organized several workshops—image design, carpentry, pot design, photography, and landscaping—to spread the word about the festival, engage the neighbors, and start the transformation. The proposal generated expectations inside and outside the community, and the network of volunteers expanded rapidly. We raised funds, collected donations, continued with the clean-

up and designed a temporary architectural intervention to accommodate the activities planned for the big day.

The first art and participation festival of Jardim Colombo took place on July 22. In the morning, volunteers coordinated several workshops—recycling, origami, participatory design, gardening, decoration, and graffiti. After a massive community lunch, various street performances took place in the afternoon, including karate, capoeira, and theater. The event culminated with a music show on the central platform of Fazendinha.

The festival was just the trigger of a wonderful process that was about to start. Since then, many more events have taken place in Fazendinha—including women's empowerment forums, a street art festival, and capacity building sessions. The park project has been formalized based on the ideas collected during the festival, simultaneous with new landscaping interventions. More volunteers and sponsors are continuously joining the network, and, most remarkably, neighbors of Fazendinha have stopped throwing trash there.

Thanks to creative placemaking, the Fazendinha Project is contributing to the expansion of the sense of awareness about deep systemic challenges that the community is embedded in. Only time will tell if Jardim Colombo is experiencing a real shift in its mindset, but, so far, the culture-oriented approach that we adopted is filling us with hope.

Antonio Moya-Latorre has a background in architecture and music. Mr. Moya-Latorre researches and works with urban processes based on a transversal vision about public space to respond, in the context of new technologies, to the growing demand for citizen participation.

Antonio is committed to developing a contemplative attitude towards the environment inspired by art to help construct solid cultural basis seeking the sustainable progress of societies through time.

He believes that the contemporary world, full of challenges and difficulties, but also of new possibilities and reasons for optimism, requires collective work to enhance the public services and social conditions in the communal project of the city.



MORNING WORKSHOPS DURING THE FIRST ART AND PARTICIPATION FESTIVAL IN JARDIM COLOMBO SUMMER, 2018



FLORA AND FAUNA OF RALEIGH BY MEGAN O'CONNOR ENCOURAGES PEDESTRIANS TO GO ON A CITY SCAVENGER HUNT TO FIND LOCAL SPECIES, AND INCLUDES A TURTLE CAREFULLY HEADING TOWARD THE CROSSWALK

RALEIGH ARTBEATS

JEN BAKER

Jen Baker is the City of Raleigh's downtown coordinator. Responsible for Team Downtown Raleigh, Baker is passionate about the "spaces between." Focused on innovation for the City's Transportation department, her role draws heavily on her sustainability background and decade-plus experience as owner of a graphic design studio.

With a B.A. in journalism and design from Arizona State University and M.S. in Urban & Regional Planning from the University of Iowa, her private-sector experience was instrumental in launching Raleigh ArtBeats. Mom to two young adults and one rambunctious German Shepherd, she enjoys the connections and collaboration that make change possible.

What do a huge slice of pepperoni pizza, little litter critters, historic quilt blocks, turtles and strawberries, a colorful dancer, a cardinal and a free-flowing kiss have in common? They are all part of the first seven installations of #RaleighArtBeats, a temporary public art project spearheaded by the City of Raleigh's Department of Transportation (RDOT) and Raleigh Arts Office, with help from the Downtown Raleigh Alliance and Artspace.

Each of the 16 participating artists was invited to create a site-specific sidewalk mural intervention in Downtown Raleigh. Each artwork is radically unique, often playing with the surrounding landscape or infrastructure. Graymon Ward's Pizza Time turns a triangle-shaped pedestrian refuge into a big slice; even the negative space of ADA-accessibility ramps play a part, acting as the "crust."

Leah Preiss's little critters admonish passers-by to use the recycling and trash can nearby instead of littering. Britt Taylor's flowing work is strewn with natural elements, and appears as though the couple is standing under a street tree for a quick kiss. Helen Seebold's quilt squares enliven a wide sidewalk, using historic patterns with twist to tell the story of nearby HBCU Shaw University, Duke Energy Performing Arts Center and other Raleigh-specific themes. Megan O'Connor is concerned about road safety, telling that story through a scavenger hunt for Raleigh species of flora and fauna.

Bright colors and musical notes in Buffy Taylor's Go with the Flo makes Raleigh Convention Center visitors want to kick up their heels. The City of Raleigh initially planned for 12 installations, unveiling one each month from fall 2018 through fall 2019. Sixteen artists replied to the call, and after reviewing all the responses, RDOT expanded its program to encompass all of the applications since each had its own intriguing style, content and message.

The City provides the paint, an ADA-compliant, low VOC porch and floor enamel demonstrated to have staying power from previous sidewalk mural installations. RDOT's Team Downtown Raleigh powerwashes the "canvas" to clear impediments and manages traffic control. All 16 works will be within the 110-block Downtown Raleigh municipal services district, and the project team created an online map including a photo, location, and an artist statement.

According to Kelly McChesney, the City's Public Art Director, Raleigh ArtBeats is a unique opportunity to showcase some well-known Raleigh artists in the public realm in addition to some up-and-coming contributors, as well as a way to strengthen relationships between the project partners. Working together on Raleigh ArtBeats has created connections that will continue forward into other creative placemaking opportunities.

DETROIT PARKS: POP-UP INSTALLATIONS AS CITY MUTAGENS

TYLER MIDDENDORF

I won't get into the oft-told story of how Detroit was Ground Zero for the collapse of American industry and was the paradigmatic image of the outfall of the Great Recession of 2008. We know these things happened. What is of more interest to me is Detroit's use of pop-up urban installations as a method of countering the effects of these catastrophic, slow-burn events.

Pop-up urban installations are not a new phenomenon—urban markets, concerts, and festivals have been around for as long as cities themselves. Yet pop-up anything has gained in popularity as a method of urban revitalization in this post-recession, post-industrial, and social media-saturated era of revitalization. Many pop-up installations are aimed at improving visitor and resident impressions of a city. They are a way to create hope and visions for change. There is something a bit different about Detroit's approach.

The first installation I remember seeing was Lafayette Greens, a community garden in the heart of Downtown where the former Lafayette Building once stood. The idea was to turn an urban liability, a vacant lot, into an urban amenity that could help stymie food scarcity while promoting community. That project began in 2010 and continues still today with great success. I don't want to attribute all of the success of urban agriculture in Detroit to this single project, but the idea has spread across the city, and is bringing healthy food to residents that need it, slowing or reversing the decline of property values, and bringing pride back to neighborhoods. Lafayette

Greens was a pop-up event that became something of a mutagen in the city—a different feature or programmatic element than what exists around it. Introducing this outside element, the users and environment test its viability. If it proves to be an advantageous feature, it gets rolled into the DNA of the city. If not, the mutagen dies, and another quickly takes its place.

Downtown Detroit has continued with its pop-up efforts. Cadillac Square hosted temporary basketball courts, restaurants, and shops. Campus Martius was turned into a land-locked beach during the summer, with sand, beach umbrellas, and plastic chairs. A beach restaurant was included. A vacant corner lot at Monroe Avenue and Farmer Street became a test ground for the Wayfinding Skatepark. The Esplanade became restaurant seating and picnic areas. These were relatively low-cost installations that serve as experiments about how a permanent version of the same type of program might fare in that location.

These installations not only paint a picture of Downtown Detroit as a place of activity, they also serve as tests for what kind of future Detroit will have. What unexpected function will take hold in the city? What will capture the public's imagination or cater to an otherwise unserved need? Pop-up installations can be the mutagens that answer these questions in ways that traditional, long-term placemaking and city building methods cannot.

Tyler Middendorf is a self-proclaimed ambassador of his native home, St. Louis. It was this city's history, complexity, and generally awkward patterns of development that led him towards his studies in architecture at UIUC, then later his Master of Architecture and Master of Urban Design at Kent State University's Cleveland Urban Design Collaborative.

Tyler is now an Architect working to preserve historic buildings, as well as a traveling Urban Design Researcher at birdsong.studio, focusing on small towns and cities across the Great Lakes Region. He hopes to establish "bodies of networks" as a non-reductive approach to understanding complexity.



IMAGE ON LEFT: POP-UP BASKETBALL COURTS AT CADILLAC SQUARE
IMAGE ON RIGHT: POP-UP SKATE PARK AT CADILLAC SQUARE
SUMMER, 2018



"THIS IS OUR FINAL INSTALLATION, WITH MANY PEOPLE WALKING THROUGH AND EXPERIENCING IT. THE WIND WAS VERY STRONG THAT DAY, SO IT CREATED A PLEASANT SHUFFLING SOUND AS THE BLUE STRIPS BRUSHED AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. WE HAD TO RENT AN AERIAL LIFT IN ORDER TO ATTACH THE ROPES AND WIRES AT THAT HEIGHT, AND WE BORROWED THE ROPES THAT ARE TIED ALONG THE PIPES FROM THE SHIPYARD HALLS."

A WALK TO DISCOVER

KATHRINE KUO

Kathrine Kuo is a fourth-year undergraduate student at the University of California, Irvine who is majoring in Urban Studies. During her third year, she studied abroad in Denmark through the University of California Education Abroad Program and has been greatly influenced by her experiences there. Her main area of interest includes the way in which the built environment, specifically cities, can be designed both architecturally and structurally to optimize livability.

As a soon-to-be graduate, Kathrine hopes to find work experiences in both urban planning and urban design sectors, since she believes that both are equally important to creating an equitable, livable city.

The project that I will be outlining today is an urban intervention project that I did for a class while studying abroad during the last term. I took an Urban Intervention class, which included a mixture of Bachelor's and Master's students, at the University of Copenhagen from the months of April to June 2018, and we worked in several groups to create installations in the city of Helsingør, a port city which is about 45 minutes outside of Copenhagen. The goal of these urban intervention projects was to create something that would bring awareness to the history of the area and to revitalize the specific site that we had chosen. To provide context, Helsingør is a city with a rich, industrial history where the shipyard was once the economic and cultural center of the city. It is also where the Kronborg Castle, a UNESCO World Heritage site, is located.

During the first day of class at Helsingør, we all started from the same point, were each given a different direction to head towards, and then instructed to walk in a straight line down that path. Afterwards, we gathered in a separate group to discuss our observations and experiences of the city. Some of us had more obstacles, like buildings or trees, in our paths and had to divert from our original lines. We also experienced the spaces differently. After this session, we made maps of the area of Helsingør and chose, within our respective groups, the specific site that we wanted our installation to be located at. Over the next few weeks, we worked consistently

with CATCH, a local educational organization at Helsingør that collaborates with different companies and organizations and develops projects that integrate art and technology. We were given a fixed allowance of money that we had to use to gather necessary materials.

This creative placemaking project came with many challenges. The site our group chose was an alleyway surrounded by many important historical and cultural buildings like the Culture Yard, a more modern, cultural center that was recently built, the Shipyard Museum, and the old shipyard halls. Since the area was an emergency driveway for fire trucks and there were fire safety regulations, we had to contact the local fire department about what kind of materials could be used, how long the installation could hang up for, and what the height regulations were. During our mock-up session in the beginning of the course as well as our final exhibition at the end, we received feedback from members of the Shipyard museum and other local community members in Helsingør, which was invaluable. We wanted more people to walk through this space, since it is an often overlooked point where the industrial and post-industrial history of Helsingør intersects in both a physical and cultural sense. Hence, we named the project "A Walk to Discover". Some of the images below document the process as well as the unfinished and finished project.

NOTHING BUT RAIN DOWN THE DRAIN

EMMA MARTIN

I am a graduate student studying urban and regional planning at Virginia Tech with a passion for public art and creative placemaking. Virginia Tech is located in the Town of Blacksburg in Montgomery County, Virginia. In the summer of 2018, I was thrilled when I received an About the Town: Life and Recreation in Blacksburg pamphlet in the mail, which was headlined “Environment for Art”. Curious about the title, I read the cover story. It turns out that a large variety of waste was being dumped into storm drains in the lively college town, creating problems for the community’s groundwater. To bring awareness to this issue, the town of Blacksburg decided to paint storm drains with environmental messages in attempt to discourage the dumping of waste in the drains.

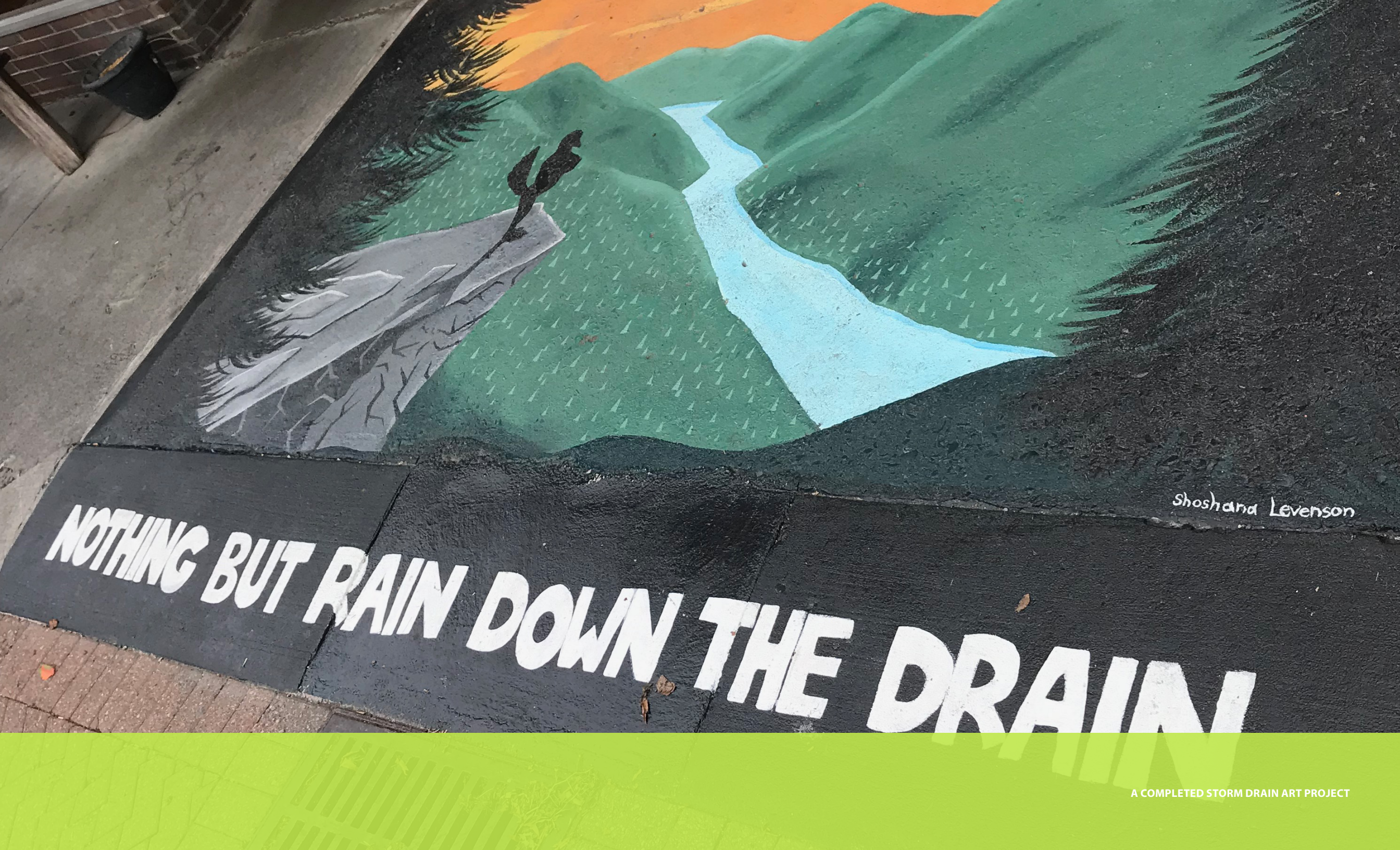
In late 2017, the public arts project invited local artists to compete in a design competition based around the themes of the protection of Stroubles Creek, the town of Blacksburg’s Freshwater Heritage, and the New River Watershed’s Natural beauty. The Town received fifty-five designs from forty-one artists and selected four winners to paint colorful, environmental murals on storm drains throughout the Town. Blacksburg storm water engineer, Kafi Howard, said “Arts projects like [these] help draw attention to problems that are frequently overlooked. Small changes in behavior can make a huge difference”.

Not only has the arts project been successful in bringing awareness to the importance of water quality in the area, but it has sparked the creation of another public arts projects in the county. On November 28th, 2018 The Bargs newspaper headline read, “Christiansburg mural raises funds for nonprofit”. A local artist is currently accepting donations and painting a mural of pets along a building in downtown Christiansburg. The donation goes toward a local nonprofit, the Montgomery County Emergency Assistance Program (MCEAP) that helps people in need throughout the county.

The Culture of Possibility by Arlene Goldbard, suggests that there are a multitude of issues around which arts projects can focus on and bring increased attention and awareness to. The Towns of Christiansburg and Blacksburg are two examples of successful public arts projects that have brought awareness to different issues in the same county.

Emma Martin is a second year Graduate Teaching Assistant for the Urban Affairs and Planning (UAP) Department at Virginia Tech pursuing a master’s degree in Urban and Regional Planning.

In addition, she currently serves as the President of the Graduate Urban Affairs and Planning Association at Virginia Tech. Emma received the Al Steiss Award for Outstanding Senior in an Undergraduate Program from the UAP department in 2017, and the Virginia Chapter of the APA: Graduate Student for Professional Promise in 2018. Emma’s interests include public art and creative placemaking, community gardening, urban design, active and sustainable transportation, and community engagement.



NOTHING BUT RAIN DOWN THE DRAIN

Shoshana Levenson



CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AT ASTOR PLACE, NEW YORK CITY

WILLIAM LEWIS

William Lewis is the Marketing & Events Director at the Village Alliance Business Improvement District in the Greenwich Village and Astor Place neighborhoods of New York City.

He is responsible for creating and implementing successful marketing, placemaking, public space activation and community engagement strategies to enhance and support neighborhood vitality and vibrancy.

William is from the U.K., where he gained twenty years' experience in retail and major mixed-use property and public space developments in London, including opening and activating newly constructed projects.

In New York City, the eclectic East Village, Greenwich Village, and NoHo neighborhoods converge at Astor Place. Its history is a rich tapestry of stories. Once the Vauxhall Gardens country resort, it became a wealthy and fashionable urban enclave owned and developed by fur trade magnate, John Jacob Astor. In 1847, the deadly Astor Place riots occurred at the Astor Opera House, a stigma that scarred the neighborhood, causing many residents to move uptown. By the early 1900's the neighborhood fell into a state of disrepair, becoming a shabby warehouse and manufacturing district.

It took until the mid-1960's for Astor Place to reinvent itself, beginning in 1967 with the installation of the now iconic Alamo sculpture, "the Cube", for the Sculpture in Environment festival. It was New York City's first piece of outdoor public art. Also in 1967, Joseph Papp's visionary Public Theater opened in the former Astor Library, a building painstakingly restored from dereliction. Two years later the Astor Place Theater opened and the neighborhood rapidly became the center of the downtown arts scene, and a hub for off-Broadway theater. Since then it has been a symbol of cultural and socially progressive change, at the nexus of a vibrant arts community.

In 2016, New York City redeveloped Astor Place as part its Public Plaza Program, creating 10,000 square feet of new public space, with the Village Alliance Business Improvement District becoming custodians of the space. As Director of Marketing & Events for the Village Alliance, I am responsible for activating the plazas through developing a program of creative placemaking complementary to the space, and representative of the East Village's diverse culture. Activations include performing arts festivals, poetry fetes, and silent discos. My ethos for creative placemaking is to ensure activations sympathetically enhance a space, and actuate human emotions of social connectivity, identity, and belonging, while being open to all and free of prejudice.

Of the many activations I have developed, Creativity Cubed most exemplifies the values and principles of creative placemaking. Creativity Cubed (named in homage to the Alamo sculpture) leverages the versatility of revitalized public space to integrate arts and culture into the community. The recurring daylong outdoor workshops celebrate the arts movement of Astor Place and the East Village by bringing together East Village arts organizations, community groups, and residents at free participatory arts workshops. At Creativity Cubed 2017, residents and passers-by created and designed miniature spinning Alamo "cubes" with folding card, collaging them with hundreds of printed images featuring symbolic neighborhood places, faces, and traces.

Creativity Cubed 2018 honored the East Village's iconic street-art and murals. A huge wood cube was constructed, and free spray paints and markers provided. People were then free to graffiti, draw, and design on the blank cube, creating a new piece of collaborative public art. An exhibit telling the stories and history of famous local murals also formed part of the event. The power and success of the Astor Place activations are their ability to unite people through creativity in public space. Bringing together people from all backgrounds, to share their stories and experiences, bonding through the influence of creative placemaking.

“DESIGN OUR DREAM PARK”: REIMAGINE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND COLLECTIVE SPACE THROUGH INNOVATIVE EXPERIMENTS

WENDY MAN YI LIN

As an urban planner and designer, I believe that cities are fundamentally about people. Public spaces are the primary gathering grounds where people meet and connect. In the metropolitan city of Hong Kong where I am from, land prices are extremely high, thus making the creation of profitable space and maximization of land value the top of the agenda. In contrast, the importance of public open space is largely overlooked.

In response to the under-utilization of public parks, a creative placemaking effort ‘Design Our Dream Park’ was initiated by a local non-profit organization. Being part of the community who observed this project, I was deeply inspired. The project attempted to envision and transform a neighborhood park in the local district of Yau Ma Tei- the idea was to reimagine the potential of public realm through artistic creation and the engagement of collective memories. Community members were involved since the very early stage and their opinions on park design were collected to guide the direction of the project.

Given that the existing public park faces the problem of a lack of flexibility and engagement, the project team made an experimental effort in exploring the element of a movable chair. Because of the distinctive urban fabrics and the rich collection of cultural features in the district, the project aimed at reintroducing these key elements into the park to build connections with its context. Local artists were involved and residents from all social groups were invited to join a chair painting

workshop, in which they were encouraged to visualize their personal experience and memories, incorporating them into the design of the chairs. Kids picked up the colorful brushes and painted trucks unloading boxes of fruits in the traditional Fruit Market; others painted the images of the massive street signboards and glowing neon lights extended from the aged building façade, the old tea restaurant that provides the best grass-root enjoyment, a small neighborhood store that served the community for decades...These elements altogether portrayed a unique image of the district through the eyes of the community and each of these also represents its own narrative.

A successful public space makes people want to stay and interact. By incorporating the fun movable chairs into the park, people are so much more engaging changing the configuration of the space by rearranging positions of the chairs and making themselves comfortable. Some middle-aged men came in with their lunch, sat down, and eventually started talking to each other as their seats were being placed face-to-face. Paintings on the chairs served as a great conversation starter. By incorporating various distinctive elements that speak to the local identity into the tangible form of a chair, the design intervention created bonding between people by reconnecting their common cultural root. Through the reintroduction of the sense of identity and sense of place into the public realm, it inspires citizens to reflect on the meaning of community empowerment and how collective efforts could be drawn to reclaim space that truly belongs to the public.

Wendy Lin gained her bachelor's degree in Urban Studies from the University of Hong Kong and she is currently a master's candidate at Cornell University with a major in Regional Planning and minor in Real Estate. Lin recognizes the importance of public spaces in the urban landscape as she believes that high-quality public spaces do not only contribute to a healthier, more livable community, they are also essential catalysts for investments and economic growth.

Lin has a strong interest in urban design and real estate development, which extend towards various critical topics including housing affordability, sustainability, public engagement, community revitalization, transportation and economic dynamism.



PARTICIPATION OF KIDS AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS DURING THE CHAIR PAINTING WORKSHOP



"THIS IS OUR FINAL INSTALLATION, WITH MANY PEOPLE WALKING THROUGH AND EXPERIENCING IT. THE WIND WAS VERY STRONG THAT DAY, SO IT CREATED A PLEASANT SHUFFLING SOUND AS THEY BLUE STRIPS BRUSHED AGAINST ONE ANOTHER. WE HAD TO RENT AN AERIAL LIFT IN ORDER TO ATTACH THE ROPES AND WIRES AT THAT HEIGHT, AND WE BORROWED THE ROPES THAT ARE TIED ALONG THE PIPES FROM THE SHIPYARD HALLS."

TUCSON'S “TACTICAL URBANISM BLOCK PARTY”

KYLE PACKER

Kyle Packer is a graduate planning student at the University of Arizona. He joined the profession after sailing 10,000 miles aboard traditional sailing ships (including the ship that played the HMS Interceptor in Pirates of the Caribbean). Visiting towns across the continent through this work made Packer recognize the need for sustainable, walkable communities.

Kyle's schoolwork allowed him to manage interdisciplinary design projects, consult for a Fortune 50 company, and present his work internationally. Upon graduating in May, Packer will move to Atlanta with his family and seek work with a planning and design firm. It is his sincere hope his work contributes to creating sustainable, meaningful places.

Creative placemaking is a lot like urban planning; most folks don't understand it until they see the physical results, but it's even better when they help create those results. In October of 2018, volunteers including University of Arizona urban planning students took part in a 'Tactical Urbanism Block Party' put on by the Living Streets Alliance (LSA), a local nonprofit focused on creating safer, accessible, and all-around better streets. Students and volunteers painted the downtown Tucson intersection of 6th Ave and 7th St, installed planters and patio furniture, and celebrated afterwards, having a great time throughout. As one of those volunteers and planning students, this project was an eye-opening experience to the power of creative placemaking and everything that goes into it behind the scenes.

Living Streets Alliance coordinated with local governmental agencies, organized a series of events, as well as volunteers and material donations to make the project a reality. It was quite the endeavor. I got involved with the project in early September at the "Community Pre-enactment" about a month and a half before the block party. Here I and other community members spent the morning learning about the planned changes to the site and performing a multimodal traffic count for the intersection, all while enjoying coffee and empanadas. The community left the pre-enactment eager to see the project on the streets and not just on poster boards.

Finally, the day of the 'Tactical Urbanism Block Party' arrived! Armed with brushes, buckets, painting clothes, and some more good food, volunteers of all ages set out to paint the intersection. Within a few hours the painting was done, and a few hours after that the intersection boasted planters, patio furniture, and lots of happy people enjoying the (by Tucson standards) cool fall weather.

Thanks to this placemaking project, a new generation of urban planners got to get dirty with the community and gain hands-on experience of how creative placemaking gets done right. We learned how coordinating with local government, businesses, and excited individuals can transform an intersection from an uninteresting, if necessary, part of many peoples' commute, to an honest to goodness place that makes people proud to live in a community. The intersection even had its first true event the following Saturday; a plant sale hosted by the same folks who donated the plants for the project.

As a young urban planner, it was a great opportunity to see how local government, nonprofits, businesses, and citizens come together to create and preserve a place. Transforming an unsafe intersection into a community art project that makes people safer, healthier, and reactivates a historical facade, is so rewarding. I can't wait to get out into the professional world and get involved in more creative placemaking projects. From what I can tell, they're a lot of hard work, good fun, and meaningful for everyone who interacts with them. What more could you ask for?

DESIGN OVER DONUTS

QUYNH PHAM

While working at a private firm, there were days when I longed for work that was both more creative and meaningful. My conviction for designing the built environment dwindled, since the environment I was too often contributing to was paved in asphalt. However, working with the Atlanta City Studio, an urban design studio within the City of Atlanta's Department of City Planning, has helped rekindle that conviction. Fifteen hours a week, I get to witness a small team of talented, passionate and compassionate city employees work to elevate the local community, which includes the recent installation of a bus shelter.

The studio moved into the southwest Atlanta neighborhood of Cascade Heights in April 2017. Many members of this community rely on public transit, particularly city buses. The 71 bus runs along the major corridor of Cascade Road, with nearly 80 stops along its route. Several of those stops are nothing more than a sign post grounded in aged sidewalks or sod. Bus patrons range from teens to the elderly to families with young children. Many stops fall short of accommodating even on a nice day.

A regularly used bus stop along route 71, situated in the Cascade Heights' commercial district, was selected to receive a new bus shelter as part of the department's ongoing Placemaking Grant Program. Staff members with backgrounds in architecture and landscape architecture began conceptual designs in February 2018. Three concepts were developed, each capturing a different design aesthetic. The morning of March 9th, the studio hosted its Design Over Donuts event, where community

members were invited to come provide feedback on the concepts while enjoying assorted donuts. Their input made clear the favored design, which was then modified based on comments received. The community wanted a shelter that was confined, flexible to the needs of riders, and reflected the character of their community. The final design includes a simple canopy structure with foldable seating, allowing riders to adapt the space to their needs, whether it is extra space for a baby stroller, a bike, or a wheelchair. Large planters just behind the canopy structure help provide enclosure while adding greenery. Signage was also proposed to provide unique neighborhood branding and real-time bus information. A final design report was compiled and presented to the community on March 26th.

Construction began in May 2018. Although speed bumps and delays presented themselves along the way, the team worked through each one to ensure that a quality product would be delivered to the community. They continue to work on carrying out the vision of the foldable seating today. The team also put in their own sweat equity by planting the planters, an endeavor that was more difficult than expected. However, the aches quickly become worthwhile when community members react positively to the new shelter, especially when expressions of gratitude are made. I am grateful to have had the privilege of playing a role in this project, working alongside a group of people whose commitment to the community truly shone throughout.

Quynh Pham is a graduate student at the Georgia Institute of Technology. She is currently pursuing a dual master's degree in Architecture and City & Regional Planning with a focus on housing and community development. She was awarded the William F. Kennedy, Jr. Fellowship, which allows her the opportunity to work with the City of Atlanta's Department of City Planning staff out of the Atlanta City Studio. Her background is in landscape architecture, for which she is licensed in the state of Georgia.



FINISHED CASCADE HEIGHTS BUS SHELTER



RESIDENTS, EMPLOYEES, AND SHOPPERS TAKE A BREAK FROM THEIR DAILY ROUTINE TO RELAX IN THE NEW PEDESTRIAN SPACE DESIGNED BY LOCAL ARTISTS AND VOLUNTEERS

MARKET STREET CONNECT

JEFF PO SUN

Jeff Po Sun is an urban planner and designer with Sam Schwartz. Mr. Sun specializes in communicating complex ideas and plans through thoughtful design strategies that help communities make informed decisions. He has extensive experiences in demographic and geospatial analyses, planning for emerging and future mobility services, and developing multimodal plans of various scales to help communities access economic opportunities and strengthen neighborhood identities.

Jeff is passionate about making the places where we live, work, and play more accessible, safe, and enjoyable through enhancing the public realm and improving multimodal connections.

Sam Schwartz, in partnership with Street Plans Collaborative, was hired by the City of Poughkeepsie, NY to assist in a complete streets initiative in the downtown area. This was part of a long-term planning initiative closely linked with the city's broader efforts to revitalize its downtown and promote transit-oriented economic development. As part of this project, we explored alternatives to redesign Market Street and enhance the public realm. Working with local residents, businesses, and partner agencies, the project team launched a demonstration project that temporarily transformed Market Street into a safer and more accessible street for all users. This was part of the visioning process to help shape what kind of city Poughkeepsie wants to be.

The demonstration project, "Market Street Connect," narrowed the street from three travel lanes to two, and created new and enhanced public spaces using temporary materials such as chalk paint, plants, and movable furniture. This type of "tactical urbanism" project allowed the community to experiment with traffic calming strategies and come together to reclaim space for the public realm.

Installation of the demonstration project took place before sunrise to avoid the morning rush hour traffic. Traffic cones were used to temporarily close one lane of traffic at a time at the crosswalks so that stencils and spray chalk could be used to decorate the crosswalk. The roadway along the corridor was narrowed first using traffic cones while existing pavement markings were covered using temporary paint. Existing traffic signs that conflicted with the new street configuration were covered and temporary traffic and street signs were installed during the demonstration project to help direct traffic and adjust curbside regulations.

Throughout the demonstration project, more than 35 volunteers helped to beautify and create approximately 7,300 square feet of additional programming and pedestrian areas along the Market Street corridor. Seasonal streetscape elements such as pumpkins, fall seasonal planters, and hay bales were procured locally and staggered throughout the newly delineated pedestrian areas while local artists and volunteers decorated these spaces with creative designs. In addition, café patio furniture and artificial turf were laid out along the new pedestrian area to create additional public seating. The demonstration project concluded with a press conference, kicking off the First Friday Poughkeepsie celebration, which is a monthly celebration of Poughkeepsie's cultural, dining, and entertainment offerings.

During the demonstration day, the project team also engaged with more than 250 members of the local community who provided feedback on the potential corridor redesign through a variety of outreach activities. The range of responses received reflected the multitude of interests and priorities among the residents, workers, and visitors along Market Street. In general, the local community was curious and excited about the demonstration project, and were enthusiastic to see new momentum for downtown Poughkeepsie. The integration of outreach activities during the demonstration project provided invaluable feedback that are enormously helpful as the City moves forward with future plans to test out additional creative placemaking.



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